

Community Action Agencies

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were created by the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as a national network of agencies with the purpose of developing local solutions to poverty. Iowa has 18 CAAs that serve all 99 counties and assist approximately 330,000 Iowans annually.

Purpose

The agencies are locally-based private, non-profit organizations that network with local organizations to assist low-income, elderly, and disabled Iowans with basic needs. Low-income families receive help in implementing family self-sufficiency plans to assist in obtaining full employment and achieving full potential. Each CAA develops programs that meet the needs of citizens in the local service areas. The CAA informs clients about assistance that is available in the community and helps them obtain it.

Programs and Services

Programs use a combination of federal, State, local, and private funds. Several programs are administered at the State level by the Division of Community Action Agencies of the Department of Human Rights. Federal programs administered by the Division include: the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LiHEAP), and the Weatherization Assistance Program. There is also an Iowa Community Action Association.

The CAAs assist clients in achieving educational goals, finding and retaining employment, and in obtaining food and shelter. Some of the services that may be provided, in addition to the programs administered by the Division, include:

- Head Start
- Child care
- Individual case management
- Food and nutrition
- Employment
- Emergency services
- Local and community planning
- Prevention strategies
- Advocacy for low-income issues
- Volunteer mobilization
- Transportation
- Job training and education
- Housing
- Youth involvement

Head Start

Most CAAs operate Head Start Programs. Head Start is a national child development program for children from birth to age five designed to promote academic, social, and emotional development, and to provide social, health, and nutrition services for income-eligible families.

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LiHEAP

This federally-funded block grant is designed to aid qualifying households with the payment of a portion of their winter residential heating costs. The program works to intervene in potentially life-threatening situations. Additionally, there is a client education component to encourage regular utility payments, energy awareness, and energy efficient practices.

FaDSS

FaDSS is a voluntary option for recipients of Family Investment

Program (FIP) benefits. The State program provides services that promote, empower, and nurture families toward economic and emotional self-sufficiency. The Department of Human Services contracts with the Division of Community Action Agencies to administer the grant program and subcontracts with the 18 CAAs statewide to provide FaDSS services.

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)

Legislation passed during the 2008 Legislative Session directed the Division of Community Action Agencies to implement a new IDA program. The IDAs are designed to promote the accumulation of assets that lead to self-sufficiency for low-income families. The program will provide State funds of up to \$2,000 to match savings set aside in the accounts by eligible individuals.

The accounts may be used for the purchase of a home; to pay for education or job training; to start a business; to purchase an automobile; or to purchase assistive technology or other devices or physical improvements to assist the individual or a family member with a disability. Participating individuals are required to complete financial education classes and asset-specific training.

More Information

Department of Human Rights (Division of CAAs): www.dcaa.iowa.gov

Iowa Community Action Association:
www.iowacommunityaction.com

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Community Action Agencies

FY 2007 Community Action Agencies Funding Sources

GENERAL FUND			OTHER FUNDS		
Iowa Department of Human Services	\$	4,302,000	US Department of Health and Human Services	\$	104,354,000
Iowa Department of Education		7,572,000	Other Federal Programs		23,546,000
Iowa Department of Public Health		791,000	Private Funding		13,603,000
Iowa Department of Economic Development		161,000	Local Governments		2,238,000
Iowa Department of Workforce Development		196,000			
Iowa Department of Transportation		436,000			
Other State Programs		766,000			
Total	\$	14,224,000	Total	\$	143,741,000

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